

Asheville City Council
Planning and Economic Development Committee

2:00 p.m., August 12, 2009
Economic Development Office Conference Room

Minutes

Present: Councilwoman Robin Cape, Chair; Vice-Mayor Jan Davis; Councilman Bill Russell

Staff: Gary Jackson, Sam Powers, Judy Daniel, Nikki Reid, Stephanie Monson, Ben Durant, Shannon Tuch, Blake Esselstyn.

The Planning and Economic Development Committee met on July 15, 2009, at 29 Haywood Street. Chair Cape called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

1. Approval of Minutes

The Minutes from the July 15, 2009, meeting were approved as written.

2. Updates

St. Joan of Arc Site

Judy Daniel, Planning Director, gave the update. Staff has been to the site, looked at the plans, and what is being built is what was approved. However, the drawings don't accurately reflect the construction process. After construction is completed and the site is filled in with two story buildings/landscaping, etc., staff believes the project will be consistent with the plans. Staff will continue to keep an eye on the project, to make sure the conditions of the approved project are met.

Holiday Inn Airport Lease

Ben Durant, CFO, gave the update. The owner of the Holiday Inn Airport leases the land from the City on which to operate their hotel. Over the past year, staff has been in discussions with the owner, who would like to terminate the lease and buy the property. The hotel owner has generally indicated his goal would be to more fully develop the property by building up the hotel, and possibly adding a conference center and restaurant. Staff recommends that, should the land be sold, it be sold at Fair Market Value. The Holiday Inn Airport owner has offered to buy the land for an amount much lower than Fair Market Value. Staff has discussed restructuring the lease, as the property is underutilized by both the Holiday Inn and the City. Discussions are currently at a stand still as the current economic environment is not conducive to restructuring the lease.

Committee members noted that the lease produces income for the City and there is no current development plan to consider anything other than a Fair Market Value.

3. Unfinished Business

Haywood Street RFP Modeling

Stephanie Monson, Urban Planner with the Office of Economic Development, gave the update. Staff is working in conjunction with RENCI to develop four models: 1) massing based on the current UDO; 2) massing in accordance with the new Downtown Master Plan design guidelines; 3) massing currently proposed by McKibbon; 4) massing proposal by McKibbon which also incorporates public space made possible by partnering with the Basilica and a realigned Page Avenue.

Since PED met in June, RENCI has completed the second iteration of site modeling. Staff has reviewed these models and given feedback. Staff will meet with RENCI representatives on July 16 for feedback on a second iteration. Two more iterations are likely, and a final draft of a model presented to PED in September for their feedback, which will be used to make final revisions to the model. RENCI should be moved into the downtown engagement site in August, with community outreach planned for late August and early September.

Moving forward, this committee will see and provide feedback on models at the September 9 meeting. Staff is working with the Asheville Design Center to decide how best to partner with them so as to create models accurately putting concepts into visual scenarios. The goal of the modeling project continues to be illustrating the difference between speculation and possibility so that the public can most accurately respond to the project.

4. New Business

Industrial Land and Zoning Discussion

Shannon Tuch, Assistant Planning Director, led the discussion. Staff supports examining industrial rezoning on a case by case basis, and broadening the definition of the light industrial zoning designation. The PED Committee recommended that staff take suggested changes to light industrial and commercial industrial rezoning before the Planning & Zoning Committee as a UDO amendment before bringing to full Council.

Change in Time of PED Committee Meetings

Chair Cape requested that PED change their meeting time from 2:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m., beginning September 9. Both Vice-Mayor Davis and Councilman Russell were in agreement. The necessary notifications shall go out immediately.

5. Presentations and Public Comment

There were no presentations or public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.